

## Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 NSCE-00 IO-14 OMB-01 SAJ-01 NIC-01 EB-11

COME-00 DRC-01 /118 W

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R 060802Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1975

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC

COMUSTDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 3542

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TW

SUBJECT: THE ERA OF GRASS ROOTS OPPOSITION HAS PASSED

1. FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF EMBASSY A-102.
  2. RECENT EVENTS STRONGLY SUGGEST THAT ERA OF GRASS ROOTS ORGANIZATION BY OPPOSITION (E.E., NON-KUOMINTANG ESTABLISHMENT) POLITICIANS IN TAIWAN IS NOW OVER. TAIWANESE POLITICIANS SEEKING MASS SUPPORT HAVE ALWAYS FACED FORMIDABLE OBSTACLES: OPPOSITION FROM WITHIN LOCAL LEADERSHIP ESTABLISHMENT, KMT SUPPRESSION AND PUBLIC APATHY. THOSE FEW GRASS ROOTS LEADERS WHO DID EMERGE, I.E. KAO YU-SHU, KUO KUO-CHI, KUO YU-HSIN, KANG NING-HSIANG, ACHIEVED PROMINENCE WITHOUT BRINGING TAIWANESE ANY CLOSER TO ACQUIRING ANY SHARE OF REAL POWER.
  3. SUCH OPPOSITION LEADERS AS TAIWAN HAS HAD, EMERGED UNDER CONDITIONS CHARACTERISTIC BEFORE SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUE
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AND FULL ESTABLISHMENT OF CHIANG CHING-KUO'S PREDOMINANCE.

THESE CONDITIONS WERE: (A) DEEP RESERVOIR OF ACTIVE RESENTMENT AGAINST MAINLANDER GOVERNMENT TRACEABLE TO 1947 RIOTS; (B) OPPORTUNITIES CREATED BY DISPLACEMENT OF TAIWAN'S TRADITIONAL ELITES, PARTICULARLY THROUGH GOVERNMENT'S LAND REFORM WHICH BROKE POWER OF RURAL GENTRY; (C) KMT'S RELATIVELY CRUDE AND INEFFECTIVE CONTROL TECHNIQUES; (D) UNDEVELOPED ECONOMY IN WHICH POLITICS WAS SIGNIFICANT PATH TO WEALTH THROUGH JOB PATRONAGE; (E) TAIWANESE HOPE AND KMT FEAR THAT OUTSIDE FORCES (AMERICAN AND JAPANESE) EVENTUALLY WOULD INTERVENE TO BRING SELF-DETERMINATION AND DEMOCRACY TO TAIWAN.

4. HOWEVER, OPPOSITION LEADERS FACE HIGHER OBSTACLES NOW THAT KMT ESTABLISHMENT HAS SETTLED DOWN TO SEMI-PERMANENT TASK OF GOVERNING AN UNDENIABLY PROSPEROUS TAIWAN. WITH GRADUAL REMOVAL OF THE ARMY FROM STREET CORNERS TO BARRACKS, AND CALCULATED USE OF TAIWANESE TO DEAL WITH TAIWANESE, GROC HAS INCREASED DISTANCE BETWEEN TAIWANESE AT GRASS ROOTS AND TARGETS OF THEIR EARLIER RESENTMENT. GROWING PROSPERITY CONCURRENTLY PLAYED MAJOR ROLE IN SHRINKING INDEPENDENTS' NATURAL CONSTITUENCY, AS MOST TAIWANESE -- INCLUDING MANY POTENTIAL OPPOSITION LEADERS -- CAME TO FIND POLITICS ALMOST IRRELEVANT COMPARED TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES BECOMING AVAILABLE.

5. KMT HAS ENJOYED INCREASING SUCCESS IN COOPTING TAIWANESE POLITICAL ASPIRANTS BY OFFERING PATRONAGE AND ACCESS, AND BY PERIODIC DEMONSTRATIONS OF FUTILITY AND DANGERS OF OPPOSITION. 1972 ELECTIONS DEMONSTRATED SUCCESS OF COPTION PROCESS AND KMT'S ABILITY TO MANIPULATE INDIVIDUAL LOCAL LEADERS. CAPITALIZING ON (1) DIMINISHING ANTI-GOVERNMENT FEELING, (2) PREMIER'S GESTURES TO THE TAIWANESE AND (3) STRONG LOCAL FEELING THAT INTERNATIONAL SURVIVAL DEMANDED DOMESTIC STABILITY, KMT WAS ABLE TO EASE MAJORITY OF ESTABLISHED OLDER GENERATION POLITICIANS FROM A ROLE HAVING ANY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE SCENE. RELATIVE UNKNOWN WHO REPLACED THEM ARE ALMOST ALL COOPTED TAIWANESE, ELEMENTS OF A KMT MACHINE SELECTED FROM ABOVE -- A MACHINE DESIGNED TO DENY OPPOSITIONISTS ELECTORAL OPPORTUNITY WHILE ABSORBING AS MANY AS POSSIBLE

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INTO LOYALIST RANKS.

6. WHILE SOME INDEPENDENTS STILL SUSTAIN THEMSELVES ON POPULAR SUPPORT AND DISDAIN COPTION BY THE KMT, THEY SEEM MORE A REMNANT OF THE PAST THAN AN INDICATION OF FUTURE SHAPE OF POLITICS ON TAIWAN. SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUE AND JAPANESE RECOGNITION OF PRC HAVE DIMINISHED HOPES THAT A FOREIGN DEUS EX MACHINA WILL INTERVENE TO ACHIEVE

OPPOSITION GOALS. MOST TAIWANESE POLITICIANS,  
FEARING INSTABILITY AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF EVEN SUCCESS-  
FUL SUBVERSION, HAVE ACCEPTED COOPTION BY CCK MACHINE AS  
THE ROAD TO POWER. THEY CONSIDER EVOLUTIONARY OPPOR-  
TUNITIES BETTER THAN BEFORE, AND OPEN OPPOSITION LESS  
LIKELY THAN EVER TO BEAR FRUIT. WHILE TAIWANESE OFTEN  
OPPOSE MAINLANDER DOMINANCE AND KMT PRACTICES ON PRINCIPLE,  
MOST NOW SEEM TO BASE HOPES FOR POWER ON PLAYING THE GAME  
OF WORKING -- AT LEAST FOR THE PRESENT -- WITHIN PRESENT  
POWER ELITE.  
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